

the

GREENWICH VILLAGE ORCHESTRA

BARBARA YAHR, MUSIC DIRECTOR

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2017 | 3:00 PM | WASHINGTON IRVING AUDITORIUM



2016-2017

30TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

A NOTE FROM THE MUSIC DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

The Greenwich Village Orchestra is proud to be celebrating our milestone 30th season! For those of you who have been attending our performances for almost three decades, you have surely noticed how the orchestra has grown and evolved into the fine group of dedicated musicians you will hear today. The GVO loves rehearsing great music from the orchestral repertoire, but what we love most is performing for a live audience; that is how music comes to life. It's another way of saying that without you, it just wouldn't be any fun.

Yours,



Barbara Yahr

Music Director and Conductor

Established in 1986, the GVO is a symphony orchestra composed entirely of volunteers. By day, we are accountants, artists, attorneys, carpenters, editors, physicians, professors, programmers, psychologists, retirees, scientists, secretaries, teachers, and writers. As musicians, we are dedicated to bringing the best possible performances of great music to our audiences and are committed to serving the community while keeping our ticket prices affordable.

Keep the Music Playing: Support the GVO!

The GVO operates on a lean budget — our concerts would not be possible without generous donations from our audiences and our musicians. A gift of any amount enables to the orchestra to:

- Hire our exquisite Music Director, Barbara Yahr;
- Attract the most talented soloists performing in NYC today;
- Perform outreach concerts in hospitals and community centers;
- Develop and enhance our *Together in Music* initiative, which makes music accessible to children and families with special needs.

Become an integral part of GVO's music making today by making a contribution to the continued success of the GVO. Online: <http://www.gvo.org/support> Mail to: **Greenwich Village Orchestra, P.O. Box 573, New York, NY 10014**

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PROGRAM

Sunday, February 5, 2017 at 3:00 p.m.

Barbara Yahr, Music Director and Conductor

Gary Dranch, clarinet

Jason Smoller, English horn

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Première Rhapsodie

Gary Dranch, clarinet

Richard Strauss (1864-1949)

Don Juan, Op. 20

— Intermission —

Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

The Swan of Tuonela, Op. 22

Jason Smoller, English horn

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Daphnis et Chloé, Suite No. 2

MORE WAYS TO SUPPORT THE GVO

The GVO will host a silent auction to support its performance of Beethoven's 9th Symphony on March 19, 2017. If you or your business would like to participate in the auction by making a tax-deductible donation of goods or services, please email trudycello@gmail.com for more information.

This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

Flash photography is not permitted during the performance.



NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

CLAUDE DEBUSSY - PREMIÈRE RHAPSODIE

You could say that Debussy had a love-hate relationship with his alma mater, the Paris Conservatoire. He studied there for twelve years, honing his pianism, winning the Prix de Rome, and becoming the composer that would stand Romanticism on its head. He also exasperated many of his teachers, for he believed that the Conservatoire's instruction in composition and harmony were stuck in the past. He was inclined towards a harmonic world that included "forbidden" dissonances and parallelisms, along with chord progressions that didn't resolve "properly," if at all.

When, years later, he was asked to join the Conservatoire's governing council, he professed himself "dumbfounded." He accepted anyway. Among his duties was to sit as an adjudicator for the school's exit examinations, called *concours*. (This is still done at conservatories today; in America we call them "juries.") When the Conservatoire asked him to compose two pieces for the clarinet *concours*, he responded with his short *Petit Pièce*, intended to test sight-reading, and his *Première rhapsodie* (sometimes called simply *Rhapsodie*, for there never came a *deuxième*).

Such *concours* pieces usually tested both the musicality and technical performance of the players, most comprised two sections, as does Debussy's. The opening section is marked "dreamily slow," and Debussy's music is languid, serene, and completely lyrical, with a playful little cadenza. The second section, a scherzando marked "moderately animated," begins with a jaunty passage in the clarinet and other winds, followed by a lyrical section, and finally a boisterous and lighthearted animé. Debussy himself called the piece "one of the most charming I have ever written," and it's impossible to disagree.

RICHARD STRAUSS - DON JUAN

Nothing could have been more "modern" in the music of the 1880s and '90s than the tone poem, that bold attempt to create drama without words and to test music's expressive powers to the fullest. Pioneered by Franz Liszt from the 1850s on, the new genre found a practitioner of genius in the young Richard Strauss. In a series of orchestral works that established him as one of the leading avant-gardists of the day, Strauss boldly tackled the most complex literary and philosophical topics.

Many Romantic writers had grappled with the character of Don Juan Tenorio, the legendary skirt-chaser first immortalized by the Spanish playwright Tirso de Molina in the 17th century,

then by Molière and, of course, Mozart and Da Ponte. The Don Juan legend has been called “the greatest erotic subject of all time,” but it is more than that. Don Juan is not your typical sex addict; by conquering women, he becomes, in a way, the master of the universe (or so he feels, which almost amounts to the same thing). And most importantly, he doesn’t hesitate to give up his life rather than making any concessions in his life philosophy, however depraved that philosophy may be. The quest for ideal love, which pushes Don Juan from one woman to the next, is really a quest for the meaning of life. The force that moves Don Juan is, of course, not learning but passion.

Don Juan’s passion is evident from the first bars of Strauss’s score, which is one of the great symphonic openings of all time. With admirable ingenuity, Strauss adapts classical sonata form (with its contrasting themes and dynamic key changes) to the expressive needs of the tone poem. One of the secondary themes, a sensual motif played by a solo violin, is imbued with special meaning as a representation of the “Eternal Feminine” that so attracts the Don. As this theme is expanded, we can literally feel the power of an all-embracing love.

The development section serves as an opportunity to revisit Don Juan’s heroic-passionate side, as well as to introduce a new theme. An insistent string theme alternating with some hesitant melodic fragments in the flute: the Don is seducing a timid young girl before our very ears. This extended romantic episode ends abruptly with the appearance of a brand-new theme on the horns: Don Juan, the hero, sallies forth in search of new adventures. The next section, sometimes referred to as the “carnival scene,” reaches another emotional “high,” but then Don Juan suddenly falls into a deep depression. He does gather enough strength for another show of heroism (in musical terms, this is the recapitulation), but the tragic end cannot be avoided. The Don surrenders to his opponent; the work, so exuberant for most of its length, ends on a bleak note, in the minor mode and pianissimo, with a few short E’s played by plucked strings, low winds and timpani.

JEAN SIBELIUS - THE SWAN OF TUONELA

The Swan of Tuonela is what Sibelius salvaged from *The Building of the Boat*, his first opera. Sibelius conceived this dark and moody music as the prelude, and, although it makes an unconventional operatic opening, it is close to perfection as a small tone poem. Sibelius realized that at once. In 1896, Sibelius introduced *The Swan* and three other tone poems as *Four Pieces from the Kalevala* (sometimes known as the *Lemminkäinen Suite*). *The Four Legends from the Kalevala* all revolve around the figure of Lemminkäinen, a young and powerful hero, and something of a Don Juan as well. Each of the four tone

NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

poems captures a decisive moment in Lemminkäinen's adventures—hunting, seducing, fighting, and even surviving his own death.

The Swan of Tuonela was the first of these four tone poems to be composed. At the top of the score Sibelius wrote: "Tuonela, the land of death, the hell of Finnish mythology, is surrounded by a large river of black waters and a rapid current, in which The Swan of Tuonela glides majestically, singing."

The music vividly paints the scene: a plaintive English horn melody rides serenely over deep string sonorities. (The strings—*con sordino*, or muted, throughout—are divided into thirteen separate lines; these, in turn, are often further subdivided.) There is a glimpse of sunlight, signaled by the harp, as the music reaches C major. But the swan sails off again into the darkness. Sibelius's sense of mood and color is keen. His understanding of sonority, even at this early stage in his career, is singular: listen, for example, how the swan's song fades over a quietly beating drum, as an icy chill sweeps through the strings (playing *col legno*, or with the wood of the bow). © Phillip Huscher

MAURICE RAVEL - DAPHNIS ET CHLOÉ, SUITE NO. 2

Ravel the perfectionist, the classical Impressionist, served only one master: musical idealism. Imagine, then, the problems inherent in a situation in which the aristocratic composer came into a cauldron seething with the outrageous temperaments of impresario Diaghilev, choreographer Fokine, scenic designer Léon Bakst, and *danseur* Vaslav Nijinsky. When the score for the ballet *Daphnis and Chloé* was completed, Diaghilev, not fully satisfied, wanted to call off the project, and only after much persuasion by Ravel's publisher did he consent to mount the production. Rehearsals were sparring matches between Fokine and Nijinsky, the latter understandably edgy as he was at the same time involved as star and choreographer. Diaghilev was also distracted, for Debussy's *Afternoon of a Faun* was scheduled to premiere a mere ten days before *Daphnis*. Further and very importantly, concepts of the ballet's character differed greatly among them. The story, a Greek pastoral romance attributed to the Sophist Longus, was thought to have been written in the third or fourth century A.D. Ravel saw it through Watteau-like eyes. "My intention in writing the ballet," he said, "was to compose a vast musical fresco, less scrupulous as to archaism than faithful to the Greece of my dreams, which inclined readily enough to what French artists of the late 18th-century have imagined." Diaghilev envisioned it as classical Hellenic art. And, in 1912, the dancers predictably had major difficulties with Ravel's irregular rhythms. Not surprisingly, *Daphnis* was not a great success at its premiere in Paris on June 8, 1912, nor is it even now a real standard in the repertory. But the score remains a flawless gem of Impressionistic art

and is certainly one of Ravel’s supreme achievements. Even the austere Stravinsky called *Daphnis* “not only Ravel’s best work, but also one of the most beautiful products of all French music.”

The ballet’s simple action revolves around the pastoral lovers, Daphnis and Chloé. The shepherdess Chloé is abducted by pirates, and Daphnis, distraught, falls into a sleep during which he dreams that the god Pan will come to his aid. When he awakens he finds his dream a reality — Chloé has been returned to him.

Daybreak, the first part of the Second Suite, is a marvel of orchestral warmth and light, and the wonder of nature’s awakening. Woodwinds and harp rush quietly in endless cascades of ascending and descending notes, like the bubbling waters of a downstream forest brook; birds begin to chirp; a warm melody in the lower string stretches itself luxuriously; an effulgent orchestral burst signals the embrace of the lovers.

The Pantomime section glows with the paganism of the languorous flute solo that dominates it. At this point in the ballet, Daphnis and Chloé mime the story of Pan and Syrinx. The flute solo is Pan’s entreaty to the reluctant Syrinx. (How could she resist such eloquent pleading?)

The General Dance, even with its strong echoes of Rimsky-Korsakov, vibrates with true Ravelian splendor: deliriously exciting music for the celebration of the reuniting of Daphnis and Chloé. © Herbert Glass

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ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

BARBARA YAHR

Now in her fifteenth season with the GVO, Music Director Barbara Yahr continues to lead the orchestra to new levels of distinction. With blockbuster programming and internationally renowned guest artists, the GVO under Barbara's baton, has grown into an innovative, collaborative institution offering a rich and varied season of classical music to our local community.

A native of New York, Ms. Yahr's career has spanned from the United States to Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Her previous posts include Principal Guest Conductor of the Munich Radio Orchestra, Resident Staff Conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony under Maestro Lorin Maazel and Music Director of the Pittsburgh Youth Symphony Orchestra. She has appeared as a guest conductor with such orchestras as the Bayerische Rundfunk, Dusseldorf Symphoniker, Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie, Frankfurt Radio, Orchestra Sinfonica Siciliana, Janacek Philharmonic, New Japan Philharmonic, NHK Symphony Orchestra, Singapore Symphony, and the National Symphony in Washington D.C. She has also conducted the orchestras in Columbus, Detroit, Calgary, Chattanooga, Louisiana, Richmond, New Mexico, Lubbock, and Anchorage, as well as the Ohio Chamber Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber, Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, New World Symphony, and the Chautauqua Festival Symphony Orchestra. She has also appeared in Israel conducting in both Jerusalem and Eilat. As an opera conductor, she has led new productions in Frankfurt, Giessen, Tulsa, Cincinnati, Minnesota and at The Mannes School of Music in NYC. Most recently, she has coached the actors on the set of the Amazon Series, *Mozart in the Jungle*, and she conducted the season opener of the Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra in October 2016.

Ms. Yahr is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Middlebury College where she studied piano and philosophy. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Conducting from the Curtis Institute of Music where she studied with Max Rudolf and an MM in Music Theory from the Manhattan School of Music. She was a student of Charles Bruck at the Pierre Monteux School in Hancock, Maine.

A central focus of Ms. Yahr's career has been her commitment to finding new ways to reach a broader population with music. This path ultimately led her to pursuing an MA in Music Therapy at NYU and training at the Nordoff-Robbins Center for Music Therapy in NYC. Her pioneering, community music therapy project, *Together in Music*, brings orchestral music to the special needs community with uniquely interactive programs presented annually by the GVO.

Barbara is married to Dr. Alexander Lerman and has two adult step children, Abe and Dania, and a 14 year old son, Ben.



GARY DRANCH

Gary Dranch obtained the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in performance from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 1981, where he specialized in and wrote his dissertation on contemporary clarinet music. He attended The Eastman School of Music, receiving a Bachelor of Music degree in Clarinet Performance in 1975. Over the years, he has befriended several composers who have written works for him, such as Elliott Schwartz, Daniel Wolff, Peter Hazzard, John Bavicchi, and Douglas Anderson. The CD, "The Brazilian Concerto", with Dranch performing the Wolff Clarinet Concerto, was a Grammy nominee in the Category, 'Best Soloist with Orchestral Accompaniment' in 2001. His CD "The 20th Century Clarinet Concerto" was released on MSR Classics in 2006. 'The Clarinet' review (March 2007) concluded: "I recommend this recording as a worthy addition to the contemporary clarinetist's audio library...there is something for everyone here, and then some. Gary Dranch is supremely adept at handling the technical and musical challenges that arise in these works." Dranch also appears on the CD "Tomorrow Will Be Today," released on BJK Publications label in 2008. Dranch's article "The Genesis of a (double) Clarinet Concerto" appeared in a 2009 issue of 'The Clarinet' journal. He is principal clarinet with the Greenwich Village Orchestra, The Putnam Chorale, and performs regularly at Lehman College and with the Westchester Band. Dr. Dranch performs and presents an annual chamber recital series called "Gary Dranch & Friends" at the Bruno Walter Auditorium in Lincoln Center. His music can be heard on his website at: www.drdranchclarinetist.com.



JASON SMOLLER

Jason Smoller maintains an active freelance performance career in New York City, where he has performed with The Chelsea Symphony, the Greenwich Village Orchestra, Apotheosis Opera, the Handel Festival Orchestra, and The Dream Unfinished. In addition to performances in many of New York's most iconic venues, including Carnegie Hall's Stern/Perelman Auditorium and Zankel Hall, he has performed with orchestras around the US and in China, France, and the Dominican Republic. He has performed alongside Joshua Bell, Kurt Masur, Lorin Maazel, Valery Gergiev, and Daniel Barenboim. Committed to expanding the repertoire for the English horn, in January 2017, he gave the NY premiere of Peteris Vasks' *English Horn Concerto*. He holds an MM degree in Orchestral Performance from the Manhattan School of Music, where he studied oboe with Stephen Taylor and Robert Botti and English horn with Tom Stacy, and a BA from Brown University. Jason plays a 1969 Laubin English horn. By day, he is the Associate Director of External Affairs for The New York Pops.



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MARCH 19, 2017 AT 3PM BEETHOVEN 9!

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Beethoven Symphony No. 9

The GVO will join forces with Seraphim and the Brooklyn Conservatory Chorale under the direction of Robert Long for this masterwork.



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MAY 7, 2017 AT 3PM BROADWAY DOWNTOWN

BARBARA YAHR, CONDUCTOR

GRASAN KINGSBERRY, GUEST ARTIST

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Join the GVO for a festive pops concert in celebration of its 30th Anniversary! Broadway stars Grasan Kingsberry and Betsy Struxness will perform some of their favorite Broadway tunes with the orchestra.



GRASAN KINGSBERRY



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